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ABSTRACT

This document reports on a study of structural characteristics in the administrative behavior of Israeli school administrators and compares the findings with similar studies conducted in the United States, Canada, and Australia. The sample consisted of eight high school administrators, whose on-the-job behavior was observed for 5 hours per day for a total of 10 days each. Results of the study show clear similarities between the structural characteristics of Israeli school administrators and administrators in other countries in the following five respects: (1) most administrators' activities are concentrated in their offices, indicating a dominant trend of territoriality; (2) a very large proportion of administrators' time is spent in verbal contacts, whether by means of direct talks or telephone calls; (3) administrators usually relate to people on a one-to-one basis, or in "dyads"; (4) the initiation of administrative activities is almost equally divided between administrator-initiated activities and activities initiated by others; and (5) administrative activities are characterized by brevity, fragmentation, and variety. The document concludes with an in-depth discussion of the importance of utilizing the knowledge of administrative patterns of communication and participation and of the allocation of administrative time. Four tables and five figures are included. A one-page bibliography is appended. (1W)

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**THE STRUCTURE OF ADMINISTRATIVE BEHAVIOR:
AN INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION**

Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of AERA

San Francisco, April 1986

EA 018 966

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Jonathan Gally

The Structure of Administrative Behavior:

An International Dimension in Educational Administration

(a) Objectives

The aim of this study is to investigate structural characteristics in the administrative behavior of Israeli school administrators, and to compare the findings with similar studies conducted in other countries, i.e., in the United States, Canada and Australia (Duignan 1980; Willis 1980; Sproull 1981; Martin and Willower 1981; Pitner and Ogawa 1981; Kmetz and Willower 1982; Gally 1984).

(b) Conceptual Framework

This research is based on a cardinal assumption, that although education varies from culture to culture, structural patterns of the administrative behavior of school administrators are common, at least in the Western World.

It is also assumed that the identification of common structural characteristics in the school administrators' behavior can be valuable for starting the drawing of a tentative description of the profession of educational administration, and may provide incentives for further and more elaborate research.

(c) Methodology

The method of this study is based on the premises developed in the "school of work activities" (Mintzberg 1973), and relies on observation, description and analysis of the on-the job behavior of practicing school administrators.

The research design was built on two observational techniques: The first derived from activity sampling, specifying that the administrative activity is the unit of observation and serves as the metric of the study. The second consisted of a preconceived structured form, including descriptive items, conceived and developed to allow the patterning of the observations in several educational settings, the grouping and the subsequent codification of the collected data for categorization, computing and analysis.

Some problems arose when comparing the findings of this study with the findings of the above mentioned studies in other countries. First, some differentiations were identified as to the definitions and the delimitations of the administrative activities. Furthermore, the ways of observation and categorization of the data searched for were not identical. More than that, the foci of perception and subsequent interpretation of the relevant data were different. Nevertheless some striking similarities as to the findings of the studies in other countries with the findings reported in this research should be emphasized. It should be noted that the

methodological issues related to structured observation and the limitations of methods currently in use are reviewed and analyzed in a recent published paper (Martinko and Gardner 1985: 676-695), emphasizing i.a: the small sample sizes, failure to check reliability, failure to consider cognitive process and managerial-environmental variety.

(d) Data Source

The sample consisted of eight high school administrators in Israel. Data were collected by for ten (10) days observing, for about five (5) hours a day, the on-the-job behavior of each administrator, a total of eighty (80) days field observations. The relevant descriptive items in the structured form were the data searched for. The data were collected by an observer who does not occupy a role in the school organization.

In the consuming job of data collecting (observing, recording and subsequent coding) some data were omitted. A small amount of data are also missing when the observer was asked not to be present in some 'sensitive' activities, at the request of the administrators or the involved persons. Another crucial point should be emphasized whenever the administrator carried on different activities simultaneously. In these cases the researcher chose to record in the coding process one activity, by eliminating a 'secondary-parallel' activity from the circle of the coding process. These limitations and others distort in a rather arbitrary fashion the complete description

of what the administrators really do, and affects in some ways the accuracy of the collected data as representative of the performed work (Martinko and Gardner, 1985: 686-689).

Finally, although the sample is small, the metric of the study, i.e., the administrative activities, permitted the collection of a large amount of data.

(e) Findings

Some preliminary notes seem appropriate.

The purpose here is to report only partial findings of the study. First, they are focused on structural characteristics of the administrative activities performed in the eight schools of the sample, namely:

- * Locality - related to the question: Where?
- * Communication - Answering the question: How?
- * Participation - Related to the question: Who Participates?
- * Initiation - Related to the question: Who initiates?
- * Time Dimension - Dealing with the Duration of the activities.

Secondly, the structural characteristics revealed in the total observed administrative load were analyzed according to the classification of the administrative activities by domains of content, namely:

- * The Domain of Instruction: which aggregates the activities performed by the administrators related to teachers, teaching, and curricula.

- * The Domain of Pupils' Services: which copes with the activities related to the logistics of student grouping and student life in the schools.
- * The Domain of Auxiliary Services: dealing with the activities designed to supply the facilities for the delivery of the educational work.
- * The Domain of Public and External Relations: which includes the activities performed with environmental agencies and individuals related to the school life.
- * The Domain of Top Coordinative Functions: which aggregates the activities devoted to the coordination of the high levels administrative functions in the schools, i.e., the Top Management.

Finally, the reader will be referred to relevant conclusions in the mentioned studies conducted in other countries for comparison (Table No. 1). Because of methodological considerations -- "variations in the data collection, coding processes, and category schemes" -- the findings of these studies will not be replicated here (Martinko and Gardner, 1980: 655).

CHARACTERISTICS RESEARCH	BREVITY & FRAGMEN- TATION	INITIA- TION	"DYAD" PARTI CIPATION	VERBAL COMMUNI- CATION	LOCAL CONCEA- TRATION
MINTZBERG (N=5) 1973	X	X	X	X	X
DUIGNAN (N=8) 1980	X	X		X	
MARTIN & WILLOWER (N=5) 1981	X		X		
PITNER & OGAWA (N=6) 1981	X	X	X	X	X
KMETZ & WILLOWER (N=5) 1982	X		X	X	
SPROULL (N=5) 1981		X		X	X
GALLY (N=8) 1984	X	X	X	X	X
N = INVESTIGATED					

TABLE 1

(1) Scope of Data

In this study 2170 administrative activities were recorded. "Administrative Activities" are defined as an event or the sum of events, containing in their boundaries a unity of content, participation and time dimension. The recorded activities totaled 370 working hours:

N = 2170

M = 10.25 minutes

S.D. = 14.08

More than 21,000 items describing the structural characteristics of the observed administrative activities were marked on the data code sheets. The findings are based on the aggregation and the analysis of the data collected in the structured observations.

(2) Structural Characteristics

2.1 Local Concentration: The administrative activities are in the main concentrated in the administrators' offices. Indeed, 83.6% of the activities are performed in the administrators' offices, while the remainder are of peripatetic nature (5.6% in the teachers' room, and 12.1% in other places in the schools, including inspection tours, and outside the schools).

When considering the classification of the administrative activities according to domains of content, this structural

characteristic is revealed as independent of the contents of the activities. (See: Figure No. 1, and Table No. 2). The local concentration characteristic was also revealed in other studies, although some slight differentiations among the studies can be noticed.

Some quotations may illustrate the conclusions on this topic arrived at in other studies:

Willis, for example, (1980: 35) asserts:

"Perhaps predictably, the location for a significant amount of the principals' work was his or her office... It was the place where they knew they could easily be located and where work tasks always awaited them. Also, in much of their interaction with other people, the principals were on their 'home ground'."

As to Martin and Willower (1981: 76) they report from a specific angle:

"Slightly over one third of the principals' scheduled meetings was spent in the offices of the contact's other party or in locations away from the school... The principals took most of their phone calls in their offices..."

Kmetz and Willower (1982:70) conclude on this topic as follows:

"The majority of the principals' meetings took place in their offices... Also almost all of the telephone calls were made or taken in the principals' offices..."

LOCAL CONCENTRATION BY DOMAINS (N=2170)

DOMAINS LOCATION	INSTRUCTION	PUPIL SERVICES	AUXILIARY SERVICES	PUBLIC RELATIONS	TOP COORDINAT. FUNCTIONS	TOTAL
PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE	504	362	294	329	262	1751
OTHER	122	66	50	30	75	343
TOTAL (100%)	626	428	344	359	337	2094
PERCENTS	80.51%	84.54%	85.46%	91.64%	77.74%	83.62%

FIGURE 1

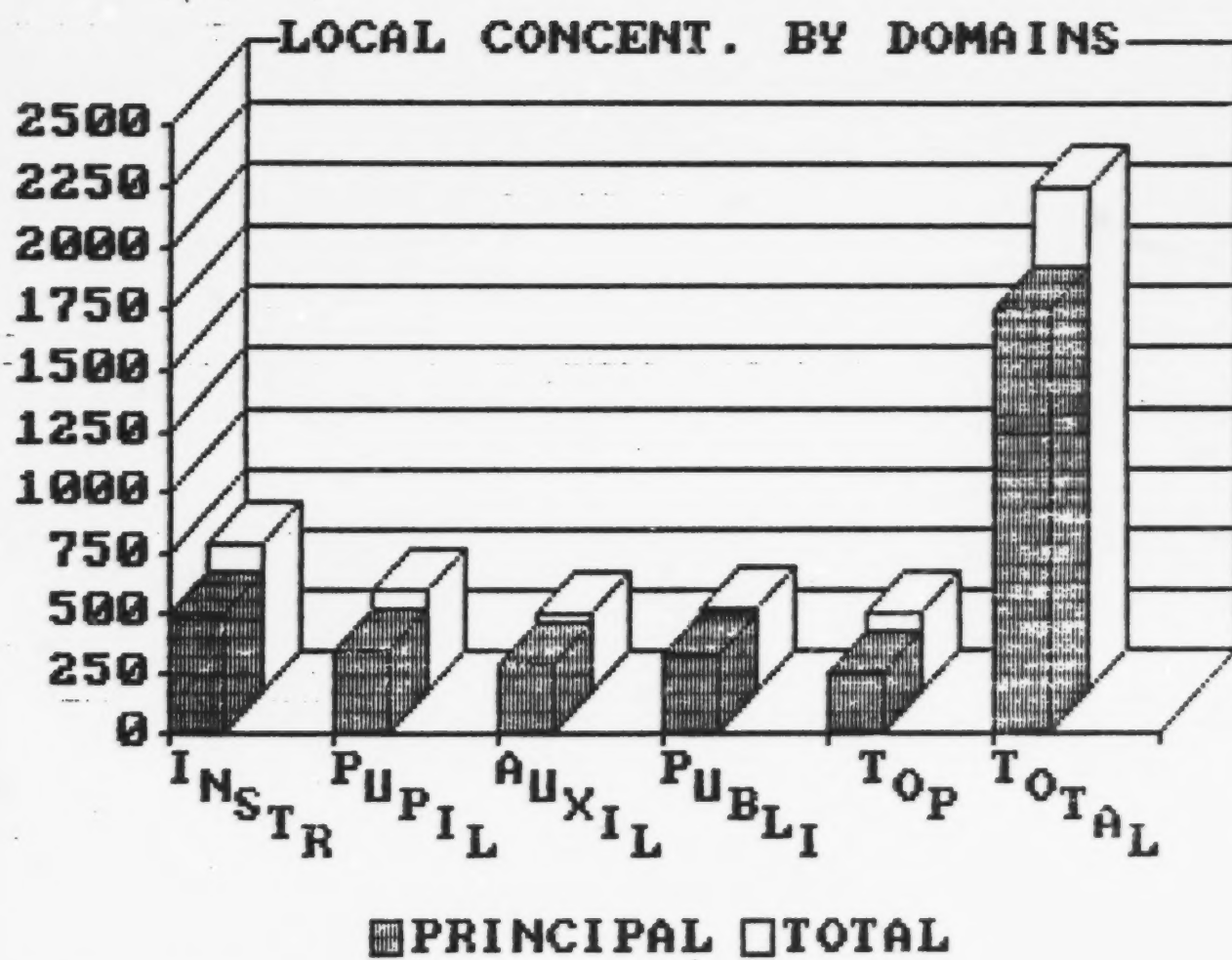


TABLE 2

2.2 Verbal Communication: The "oral" nature or the "verbal" characteristic of the administrative activities performed by the administrators is corroborated by the data. Indeed, a very large proportion of the administrators' time is spent in verbal contacts, whether by the means of direct talks or telephone calls. In this study 82% of the activities are based on verbal contacts, respectively 65% direct conversations, and 17% by means of phone calls. Only 10.8% of the administrative activities are concerned with writing and/or reading, while the remainder have a visual characteristic consisting, in the main, of inspection and supervisory assignments.

The verification of these findings in the identified domains of administrative endeavor show the weight of the verbal factor in the administrators' work, almost independent of the content of the administrative activities (see Figure No. 2 and Table No. 3).

Here also some quotations of other studies seem appropriate:

Duignan (1890: 15) resumes his findings as follows:

"The superintendent spent a large proportion of his working time in verbal contacts with others. He averaged 26 verbal contacts each day and the contacts accounted for approximately 70% of his daily working time."

Pitner and Ogawa (1981: 55) assert:

"It was found, then; that the superintendents spent nearly all their work day communicating ("conversating") with individuals and groups."

Kmetz and Willower (1982: 70/73) report:

"Over 86 percent of the elementary principals' activities occupying more than 70 percent of their time involved personal contacts. The contacts included face to face meetings, telephone calls, and the often brief visual and verbal interactions that occurred during monitoring and touring."

"The principals' worlds at work were basically verbal. they spent more than 2/3 of their time talking with people."

Willis (1980: 34) emphasizes:

"The largest proportion of the principals' time at work was spent in personal contacts (i.e. face-to-face contacts, labelled 'conversations')"

and Sproul (1981: 116) concludes:

"Whatever managers do, they tend to do out loud."

VERBAL COMMUNICATION BY DOMAINS

DOMAINS	INSTRUCTION	PUPIL SERVICES	AUXILIARY SERVICES	PUBLIC RELATIONS	TOP COORDINAT. FUNCTIONS	FAI
MEDIA						
TALK OR PHONE CALL	539	404	292	303	192	1730
OTHER	78	21	45	53	150	347
TOTAL (100%)	617	425	337	356	342	2077
PERCENTS	87.35%	90.06%	86.65%	85.11%	56.14%	83.29%

FIGURE 2

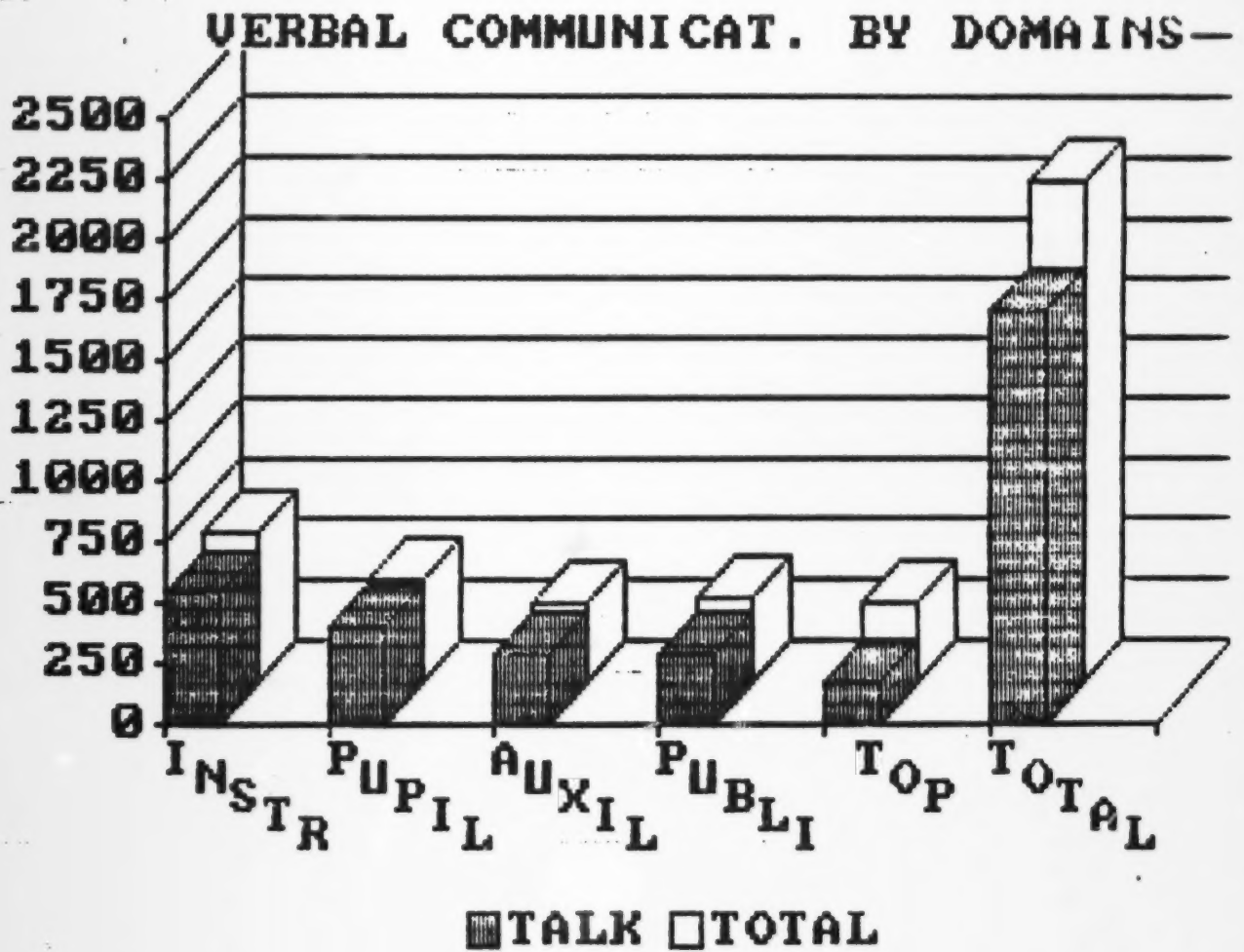


TABLE 3

2.3 "Dyad" Participation: The administrators maintain their relationships with people in the main on a one-to-one basis. Indeed, a central finding in terms of participation patterns of the administrators is that more than 75% of the administrative activities in this study are performed with the participation of only one person besides the administrator. The administrator's job seems to be predominantly one-person centered. These findings are also corroborated in the identified domains. (See Figure No. 3 and Table No. 4).

Here are some quotations from other studies on this topic: Willis (1980:50) concludes on this topic as follows:

"The principal's job is people-centered with a predominance for one-to-one encounters, calling for an intensive level of interpersonal contact."

Investigating the behavior of superintendents, Pitner and Ogawa (1981: 49) revealed:

"Superintending is communicating. Most of this communicating occurs in dyads."

"Almost all (82 percent) of the contacts were dyadic -- that is they included the superintendent and one other individual."

Martin and Willower (1981:76) found that in the investigated secondary school administrators:

"The vast majority of exchanges involved only one other person."

"DYAD" PARTICIPATION BY DOMAINS

DOMAINS DYAD PART	INSTRUCTION	PUPIL SERVICES	AUXILIARY SERVICES	PUBLIC RELATIONS	TOP COORDINAT. FUNCTIONS	TOTAL
ONE PERSON	537	341	303	311	292	1784
MORE THAN ONE	76	17	57	51	113	314
TOTAL (100%)	613	358	360	362	405	2098
PERCENTS	87.60%	95.24%	84.17%	85.91%	72.09%	83.08%

FIGURE 3

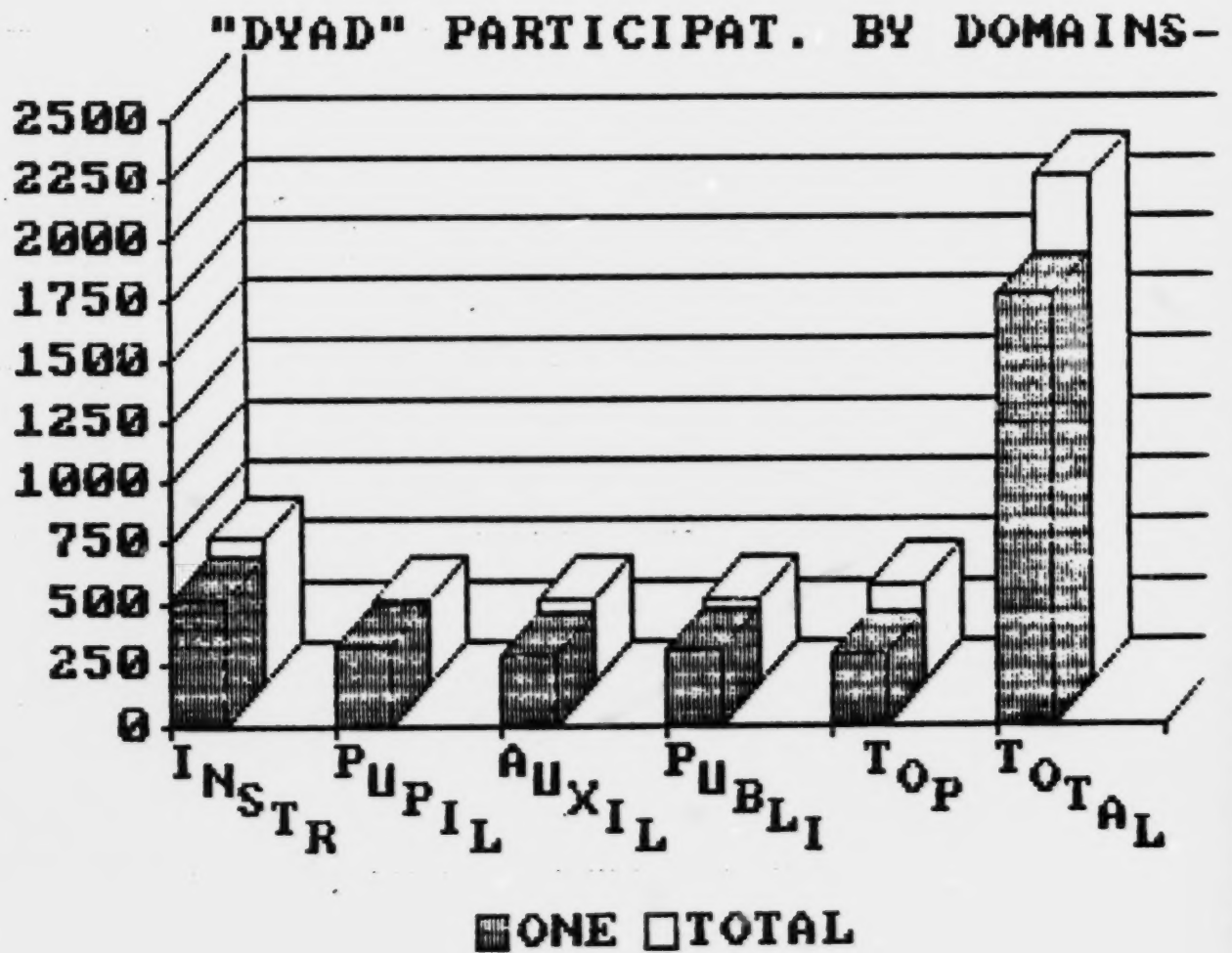


TABLE 4

2.4 Initiation: The initiation of the administrative activities in this study are divided almost symmetrically by the activities initiated by the administrators and their office staff (48 percent) or by others within or outside the school organization (52 percent). While considering the initiation patterns by domains of content some diversions due probably to the persons involved in the activities, were revealed in the Domain of Pupil Services, and in the Domain of Top Coordinative Functions. (See Figure No. 4 and Table No. 5).

In other studies some conclusions can be quoted: Sproull (1981: 116) in his research on "managerial attention" indicates:

"The managerial attention is as much self directed (initiated by the manager) as other directed (initiated by others).

Duignan (1980:21), investigating superintendents, concludes:

"Almost half of the superintendents' contacts are initiated by other people."

Pitner and Ogawa (1981:53) found that 58 percent of the administrative activities are initiated by the superintendents. It should be noted that this trend was not corroborated in the research of Martin and Willower (1981: 76)

"The majority of each of the face-to-face contact types were initiated by the principals themselves."

INITIATION BY DOMAINS

DOMAINS INITIATION.	INSTRUCTION	PUPIL SERVICES	AUXILIARY SERVICES	PUBLIC RELATIONS	TOP COORDINAT. FUNCTIONS	TOTAL
PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE	304	161	146	157	261	1029
OTHER	315	256	191	188	78	1028
TOTAL (100%)	619	417	337	345	339	2057
PERCENTS	49.11%	36.61%	43.32%	45.51%	76.99%	50.02%

FIGURE 4

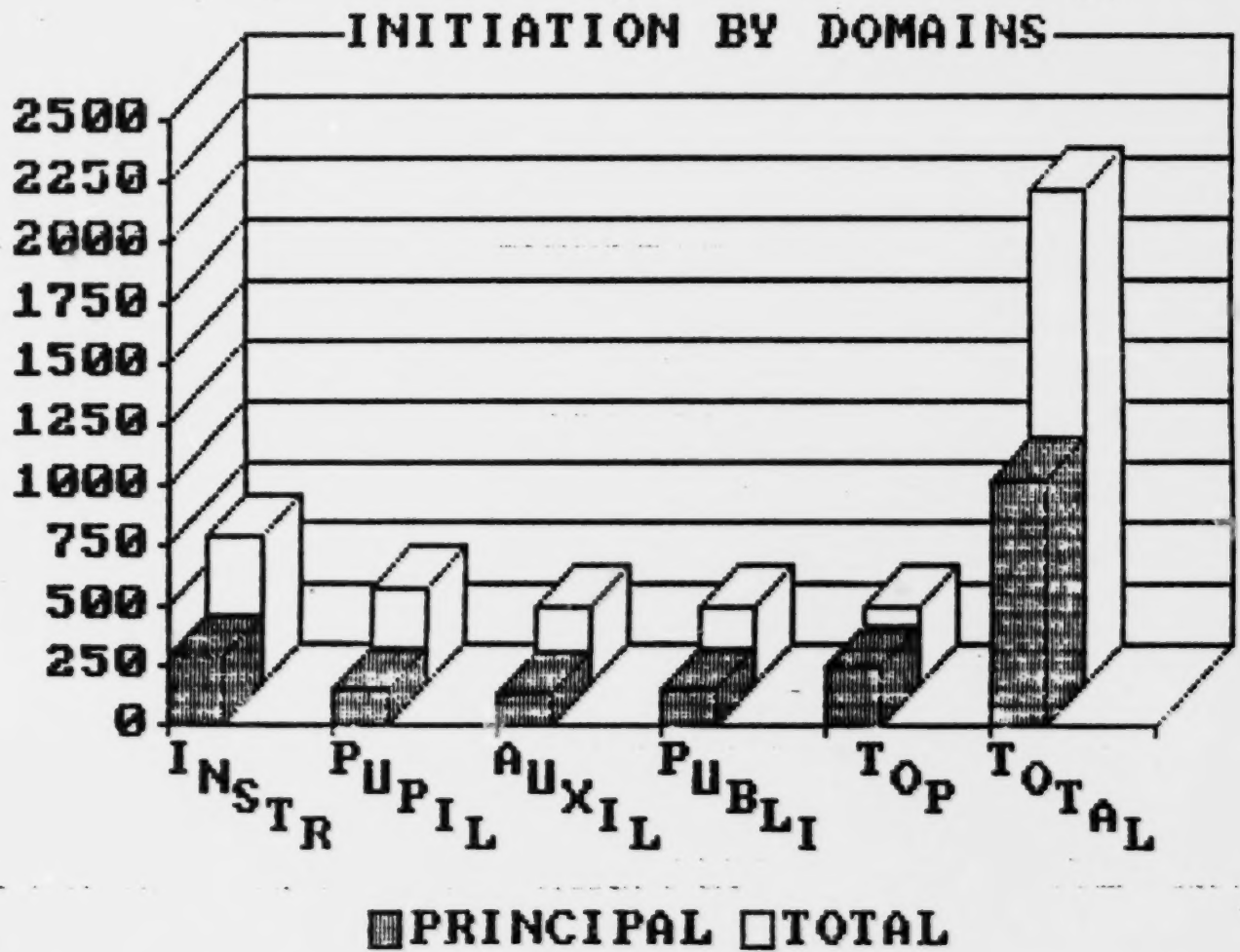


TABLE 5

2.5 Brevity: The characterization of managerial work by brevity, fragmentation and variety is emphasized by Mintzberg (1973: 35), and by most of the pre- and post-Mintzbergian studies (Martinko and Gardner 1985: 686-689).

In this study data reveal that the average time devoted to the observed administrative activities was 10.25 minutes with s.d. 14.08, and that more than 50% of the activities lasted less than 5 minutes, as follows:

Activities Lasting up to	1 min.	5 min.	10 min.	15 min.	20 min.	1 hour & more
Percentage	16.18%	54.65%	73.04%	82.53%	87.79%	0.88%

As to the fragmentation of the administrative activities, in this study 17% were interrupted.

When considering the administrative activities according to their domains of content, the following averages were revealed, and the deviations could be explained in relation to the participators in the activities:

- * Domain of Instruction: 10.2 min. S.D. 12.86 (N=625 activities)
- * Domain of Pupil Services: 7.3 min. S.D. 8.95 (N=430)

- * Domain of Auxiliary Services: 6.6 min. S.D. 8.74 (N=343)
- * Domain of Public Relations: 11.9 min. S.D. 18.61 (N=361)
- * Top Coordinative Functions: 11.7 min. S.D. 11.53 (N=318)

As to some conclusions in other studies:

Martin and Willower (1981: 79) assert:

"Most (81.4 percent) of the activities that the subjects entered into ranged in time from one minute to four minutes..."

"The tendency of interruption involved 50 percent of all observed activities..."

Pitner and Ogawa (1981: 54) report:

"The activities of the superintendents were characterized by brevity, variety and fragmentation. Over sixty percent of the superintendents work related activities that lasted less than nine minutes."

Investigating school principals in Australia, Willis (1980:41) found that 67 percent of the administrative activities did not exceed five minutes duration. He also emphasizes:

"A significant determinant of the varied and curtailed nature of the principals' work was the occurrence of interruptions that contributed to the sense of discontinuity in the principals' performance."

Duignan (1980:21) found that the superintendents are

"...often forced to condense their efforts within restricted time frames".

Mintzberg (1973:35) dealing with the issue of brevity of managerial activities, argues that:

"... The manager becomes conditioned by his workload. He develops a sensitive appreciation for the opportunity cost of his own time..."

This section was intended to specify some structural analogies identified in the administrators' behavior in different countries, and related to:

(1) the location, (2) media, (3) participation, (4) initiation, and (5) the duration of the administrative activities.

First, most of the activities were concentrated in the administrators' offices, indicating a dominant trend of 'territoriality'.

Secondly, the oral nature of the administrative activities revealed a significant communication-pattern, showing the predominance of live verbal relationship.

Thirdly, the "dyad" participation pattern has been revealed as predominant, seemingly depicting the explanatory and the influential power of face-to-face and one-to-one encounters.

Furthermore, the administrators initiated the activities, and were initiated to perform the activities in quite the same proportion, showing the interactive characteristic of the administrators' work.

Finally, the administrative activities were revealed as being more often than not characterized by their brevity,

showing the importance of the effective use of time and emphasizing that time pressures on the administrators seem to be one of their crucial concerns.

As stated above, because of considerations related to methodological issues, the findings of the Israeli study were compared with some relevant conclusions arrived at in studies of other countries. The link of the administrators' behavior with contextual factors was beyond the scope of this paper.

(f) Concluding Remarks

It should be emphasized, before concluding this paper, that to truly develop knowledge further, more must be done than to replicate observational research in different parts of the world and in different cultures. Indeed, behavior should also be examined in the social, political and cultural contexts, related to the matter and the purposes of the behavior on one hand, and should be investigated considering the study of administrators' inner cognitive processes and their impact on the determination of their on-the-job behavior on the other hand. As to Martinko and Gardner (1985: 688): "... When put into perspective of current theories of managerial behavior, the observation of overt managerial behaviors characteristics of structured observation studies is an incomplete process that touches only the tip of the iceberg". This study may provide incentives for further and more elaborate research, including, for instance, complementary observational research methods and the incorporation of qualitative-ethnographic studies.

Nevertheless, it is the contention of this paper that the comparison of structured observations of the work of education administrators across cultures and nations has some worth. It permits the tentative drawing of some elements of a common frame of the administrators' on-the-job behavior. Two dimensions of their behavior shall be forwarded in this final section. The first is concerned with the administrators and identified patterns of communication and participation. The second deals with the administrators and the crucial issue of the allocation of administrative time.

1. Participative Communication

The patterns of communication and the modes of participative management revealed in this study and the analogies with the findings in the studies in other countries, permit the identification of a "principle of participative communication", that seemingly characterizes educational administration.

The rationale of this proposed principle is rooted in a vital need for collaboration and cooperation of the administrators with professionals operating in the schools, and with public persons influencing the operation for the delivery of educational services. The administrators know that education, mainly performed in the classrooms, is definitely in the hands of individual professionals, preserving a high degree of autonomy. The administrators are also aware of the impact of

external forces on the school realities for the maintenance and the survival of the school organization. The need for continuous collaboration with these forces in the dynamic fluidity of school life explains the crucial importance of participative communication, based on the permanent exchange of information, in order to make decisions on a collaborative basis. Otherwise, the operations can be beyond the reach of the administrators.

The administrators were found to be in a focal position in the communication network of their organizations. They maintain a network of continuous live relationships with a variety of people who participate in the administrative activities, influencing and being influenced in the maintenance and in the decision-making processes. This communicative relationship of the administrators with their environments seems to be crucial for the effective use of human resources for the running of the educational services (Mintzberg 1983: 394).

This relationship is predominantly rooted in verbal interactions, performed mainly on one-to-one encounters in the administrators' offices, seemingly indicating the crucial importance to develop an intensive level of interpersonal contacts as a basis, to quote Wiener's well known dictum, for "the human use of human beings". Operationally this means telling (giving informations), listening (receiving informations) and discussing (exchanging views and searching informations), in order to share authority and responsibility,

but also to determine the setting of the decision premises, to support and to monitor, and to narrow subsequently a possible gap between decision-makers on one hand, and operational groups and individuals on the other. Language in educational organizations is a powerful device in the administrators' control system. It permits to receive a synoptic view on the workflow in the school organization. In this instance it seems interesting to witness that, from a structural point of view, the administrators' activities are mostly territorially bounded in the administrators' offices (their 'home ground'), and that their "dyadic" participation characteristic is emphasized in the findings, both presenting the most opportune stage for persuasion instead of 'fiat' approaches in educational administration. The vitality of these structural dimensions of participative-communicative nature for all parties involved finds its expression in the symmetrically revealed division of the activities' initiations by the administrators and by others who participate in the activities. The argument holds that the principle of participative communication, as analyzed in this section, is a sine qua non structural frame of educational administrators' behavior.

2. Compressibility of Administrative Time

The second principle proposed is concerned with the allocation of administrative time and is labelled "the principle of time compressibility."

Indeed, the administrators perform their work in a defined temporal frame, when their workload and the number of deadlines they have to meet, continuously put pressure on them.

Subsequently the issue of time allocation is crucial in organizing the administrators' schedule, as mentioned in different ways in the work activities literature. Some quotations seem appropriate.

Duignan (1980:21) asserts the need "to condense efforts within restricted time frames". Willis (1980): 46) specifies: "The school principal does not enjoy the luxury of undisturbed time to deal with and complete the tasks that face him." Mintzberg (1973: 35) argues: "The managers become conditioned by their workload." Pitner and Ogawa (1981: 55 and 59) investigating superintendents note: "the superintendents must remain open to inputs from a diversity of information sources" and "develop an acute sense of timing". Kmetz and Willower (1982:77) approach this issue of time pressure from another angle: "Events ordinarily controlled the principals rather than the other way around. In other words the principals had not worked out means for deliberately allocating their attention (time?) ... Thus a key concern for the practitioner should be how to allocate attention (time?) to valued pursuits while handling the continuous action demands of administration". In all the studies a high volume of tasks related to a restricted temporal frame is emphasized.

The need of the administrators to perceive and to control directly and almost immediately the changing and dynamic realities of the educational institutions gave birth to the compressibility of time within the given temporal frame being at the disposal for the delivery of the administrative functions. This defined temporal frame often creates a bind of time, which generates a rapid pace of consecutive short activities, to cope with the administrators' workload.

The two principles, the one dealing with communication and participation patterns and the second coping with time allocation are considered as significant for understanding of administrative behavior, and for administrators' pre- and in-service training programs.

* * *

Ibn Tibbon, the Jewish medieval philosopher, wrote in his introduction to Maimonides' "The Guide of the Perplexed" as follows:

"Every deed has four causes for its creation and its existence and no man can evade any one of them, and they are: the doer, the matter, the form, and the purpose."

It was the contention of this paper to provide some insights on the form of administrative behavior. The path for critical comments and expansion is open.

Furthermore the investigation of the doer, the matter and the purposes is a worthwhile effort. Whether differentiated or integrative findings across cultures will emerge, should be addressed through further research.

N.B. This study is an extension and a development of a chapter in a previous research: See: Gally J., The Evaluation Component in Educational Decision-Making. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of AERA, New Orleans, 1983.

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